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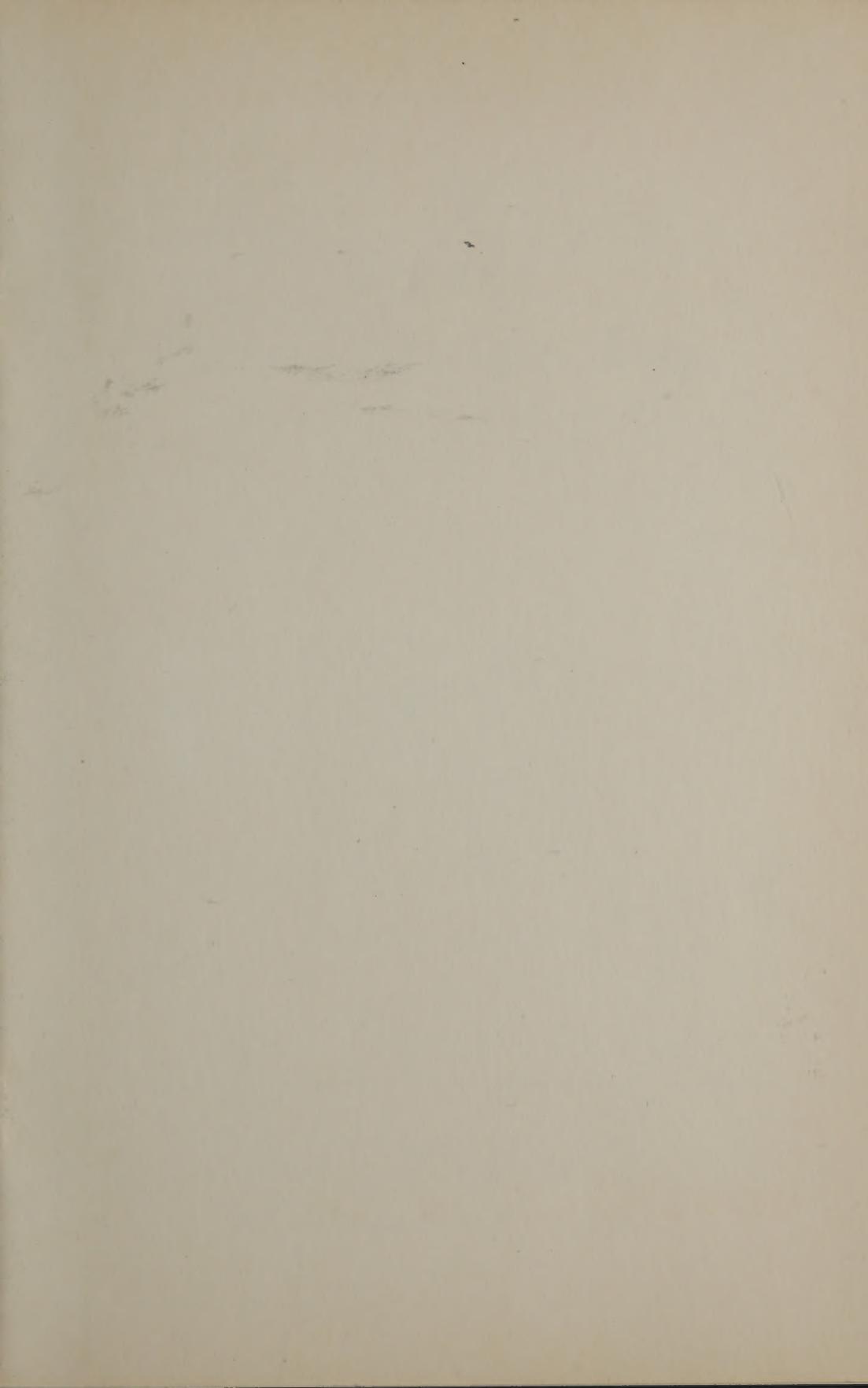
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JAMES  
STRAWBRIDGE  
ESQ.

By E. A. Glover







# James Strawbridge Esq.

"GENTLEMAN PIONEER OF TIoga COUNTY"



BY EDWIN A. GLOVER

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## ... PREFACE ...

The research which lead to this monograph was undertaken in the hope of further substantiating the belief that James Strawbridge was Tioga County's first pioneer. Mr. Charles Tubbs' monograph of nearly fifty years ago which claimed this honor for Strawbridge had been generally accepted as correct because of the author's reputation as a local historian. However, the Tubbs' paper was not entirely conclusive, and my curiosity concerning this Philadelphia gentleman who chose to live in the wilderness was aroused. The James Strawbridge Collection in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, which had never been previously studied, proved to be of no little value. However, instead of strengthening the Tubbs' theory, these papers certainly disprove it.

Much of the Strawbridge story is still unwritten. We still do not know just what happened between Strawbridge and the Yankees as a result of which Strawbridge gave up his home in Tioga County. His life after his boyhood in Maryland and until he became interested in Tioga County land is still shrouded in mystery. What this monograph fails to disclose, as well as the previously unpublished information which it does set forth, proves that the history of the past has not been written, but is being written and will be written in the future.

Edwin A. Glover

April, 1953



## **James Strawbridge**

Taken from the original miniature in the possession of his great grand-niece, Miss L. Murray Ledyard of Cazenovia, N. Y.

James Strawbridge was born in 1755, the second son of John Strawbridge (originally Strawbridge) and Jane Miller Strawbridge. His father was born in Ireland and came to the Eastern Shore of Maryland, near Rack Creek, about 1752. The family later moved to Cecil County, Maryland, near the Pennsylvania line, and eventually settled at "Fair Hill", near Elkton. Here the parents remained.<sup>1</sup>

From his boyhood and early youth in Maryland until he appeared in Philadelphia somewhat prior to 1785, nothing relative to the activities or whereabouts of James Strawbridge is verified. We are told that he was a member of Gen. William Smallwood's Maryland brigade in the Revolutionary War.<sup>2</sup> This is not indicated by the records.<sup>3</sup> After the War Strawbridge was often addressed as "Captain".<sup>4</sup> Admittedly the records are not complete, and it would be rather arbitrary to completely discount the tradition that Strawbridge served in the Revolution just because it cannot corroborate the official records.

Be that as it may, the end of the War found Strawbridge in Philadelphia, drawn there probably by his older brother, John. John Strawbridge for several years had been established at Walnut Street Wharf as a dealer in tobacco and other commodities.<sup>5</sup> Just how James' time was occupied during the next few years we do not know. He may have been associated with John in some capacity.

And now for James Strawbridge and Tioga County. By the Treaty at Fort Stanwix in 1784 Pennsylvania acquired the Indian title to the remainder of the land within its boundaries. This last purchase, known then as the new purchase or late purchase, included the present Tioga County. It was

the last frontier within the Commonwealth. Soon after its acquisition, Pennsylvania offered the land for sale.<sup>6</sup> The Strawbridge brothers, as did many other Philadelphians, became interested in land in the new purchase. It was a speculative venture, but apparently attractive. The land warrants were to be issued by lottery.<sup>7</sup> A warrant was not confined to any particular location, but enabled the warrantee to locate upon any vacant land.

On May 17, 1785, at the Sign of King of Prussia on Market Street in Philadelphia the lottery was held.<sup>8</sup> James and John Strawbridge were there. Of the 564 warrants issued that day, James purchased five and John eight.<sup>9</sup> This was only the beginning. The location of the warrants was the important step, for the location would largely determine their value. The lower numbered warrants took precedence as to time of location. Several were surveyed along the Tioga and lower Cowanesque Rivers during the late summer.<sup>10</sup> These were in William Maclay's district and were located for speculators who had drawn lower numbers. The Strawbridges had to, or at least did, wait until June of the following year for the location of their warrants.<sup>11</sup> The district surveyor who located the Strawbridge warrants was Thomas Tucker. His district was west of that of Maclay. Nearly all the fertile bottom land between Elkland and Knoxville on the north side of the Cowanesque River was included in the Strawbridge claim. Starting at the eastern end of this area, five of John's warrants were located in Osceola and eastern Deerfield Townships, and two of James' in the center of Deerfield. On the same trip a much larger warrant in the name of Thomas Proctor, embracing all the flat

1. Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania, Wilfred Jordon, Editor, Vol. 12, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1950.
2. James Strawbridge, The Pioneer of Tioga County, by Charles Tubbs, page 6 and 13, *Agitator*, Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, 1906, hereinafter referred to as Tubbs.
3. Archives of Maryland, Vol. 18, which contains the muster rolls of Maryland Revolutionary troops, does not mention Strawbridge. Inquiries directed to Maryland Hall of Records and Maryland Historical Society have produced negative answers. Pennsylvania Archives, Fifth Series, which contain the Pennsylvania Revolutionary muster rolls, show no service for Strawbridge.
4. Strawbridge Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, various letters.
5. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., various memoranda.
6. Pa. Archives, First Ser., Vol. XI, page 508: Act of Dec. 21, 1784, 2 Sm. Laws, page 270.
7. Act of Apr. 8, 1785, 2 Sm. Laws, page 317.
8. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., memorandum.
9. See tables for reference to Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs records.
10. Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs Warrant Maps for Tioga County—see tables.
11. Tubbs, page 6, places the date of the location of Warrant 451 as June 25, 1785, relying on the date shown on the original survey in the Land Office Bureau. All the other surveys in the vicinity bear dates from June 22 to 25 incl., 1786. From this I conclude that the surveyor made a mistake in writing the date on the one survey. It is difficult to believe that a single warrant was surveyed in 1785 and that exactly one year later the adjoining warrants were surveyed.

land from just west of Academy Corners to the western boundary of Deerfield Township, was surveyed. The three other John Strawbridge warrants were located in Delmar Township in August, 1786. James' three other warrants were not located until later.<sup>12</sup>

It has been asserted that James Strawbridge accompanied Thomas Tucker and his surveying party.<sup>13</sup> He probably did, but there is no positive evidence. The land included in the Strawbridge warrants was of the best in Tucker's district. Somebody in the party had the Strawbridge interests very definitely in mind. The name, "James' Choice", given to Warrant No. 451, indicates that it was selected personally by James.

John Strawbridge was just another land-speculator. When did James decide on the dual role of speculator and pioneer? With due regard to previous conclusions to that effect, I cannot be certain that on that June morning in 1786 when James Strawbridge first saw that broad, level valley floor just east of Academy Corners he determined to make it his future home.<sup>14</sup> It was several years before we can be certain that he spent much time there. Perhaps, the idea was of gradual development.

By the autumn of 1786, Strawbridge was back in Philadelphia.<sup>15</sup> In November he increased his holdings on the Cowanesque by the purchase of the Thomas Proctor warrant located by Tucker the previous summer.<sup>16</sup> This 732 acre tract, out of which Knoxville Borough was later taken, adjoined James' Choice on the west.

We cannot be certain as to the date of Strawbridge's next visit to Tioga County. He probably made several trips during the next few years. However, there is no conclusive evidence that he spent much time along the Cowanesque until 1791. There is very persuasive evidence for a contrary belief. He was in Philadelphia from time to time at least from the fall of 1786 to 1791.<sup>17</sup> He was unknown for several years to the

little settlement which Samuel Baker started at Lawrenceville in 1787.<sup>18</sup> While Strawbridge probably made an occasional visit to James' Choice to direct the work, I am strongly inclined to the belief that the actual labor involved in clearing the land and erecting the buildings was performed by hired hands. James Strawbridge was a gentleman in the 18th century usage of the term. He was not a dirt pioneer. He had a lung ailment.<sup>19</sup> By 1791 he had a hired man on the Cowanesque. The hired man probably was there before. If Strawbridge was unknown for several years to the Lawrenceville settlement, I cannot believe that he spent much time before 1791 just eighteen miles farther up the river.

In 1791, probably by early summer, James Strawbridge was at James' Choice supervising the work. With him was his hired man, Benjamin Lytelton, formerly of Newtown Point.<sup>20</sup> Lytelton remained with Strawbridge nearly all the time the latter was on the Cowanesque. In addition to the regular hired hand, Strawbridge employed other help from time to time, including Amos Stone, David Wright, and Levi Cook.<sup>21</sup> By the autumn of 1791 work at the Strawbridge "improvement" was progressing nicely. Where was the exact location of the clearing? The traditional site is designated by the marker erected at the south edge of Pennsylvania Route 49 on the Clark (Carpenter) farm east of Academy Corners. If one chooses to reject this tradition and rely upon other tradition, the clearing was west of the Clark farm. Tradition has it that when Ebenezer Seelye and William Knox came to the Cowanesque in 1798 Knox

12. See tables for locations and dates.
13. Tubbs, page 6-8.
14. Tubbs, page 8, concluded that a definite idea of settlement was in Strawbridge's mind at least from the time of the location of Warrant No. 451.
15. Strawbridge Collection H. S. P., Alexander McDowell to Strawbridge, October 30, 1786.
16. History of Tioga Co., Brown and Co., 1897, page 422, hereinafter referred to as Brown.
17. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Alexander McDowell to Strawbridge, Oct. 30, 1786, May 9, 1789; James Barr to Strawbridge, Jan. 12, 1790; John Adlum subscription list, Aug. 18, 1790.
18. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisba letter, undated. As to the date of Baker's settlement at Lawrenceville, see History of the Settlement of Steuben Co., by Guy H. McMaster, Bath, N. Y., 1852, pages 29-30; Brown, pages 56-57, 207, 524-526, History of Tioga Co., Munsell and Co., 1883, pages 29-30; Charles Tubbs, relying upon what a descendant of Abner Kelsey told him to the effect that Kelsey visited Strawbridge at James' Choice during the running of the N. Y.-Pa. boundary survey, concluded that Strawbridge was there in 1787 as a settler. This is insufficient in the light of the contrary evidence which Mr. Tubbs did not have. Tubbs, page 8, note 8.
19. Tubbs, page 6, quoting memoirs of George Strawbridge.
20. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., account book entry, Oct. 3, 1791.
21. Account book mentioned in the previous note also shows payments to Stone and Wright; Strawbridge Collection also contains a memorandum of work instructions for Levi Cook.

settled on the Strawbridge clearing. We may reasonably assume that the subsequent deed to Knox would include the land upon which he settled. The conveyance to Knox did not include any part of the Clark farm, but did include land west of it.<sup>22</sup> The theory that the Strawbridge clearing was west of the Clark farm is strengthened by the location of the "Strawbridge Spring" on the Skinner (John W. Knox) farm. The location of this spring has been established without question,<sup>23</sup> although no trace of it remains today.

Upon the Strawbridge clearing were erected a cabin, a barn, and at least the beginning of a mill.<sup>24</sup> Upon the south side of the river there was a mill race.<sup>25</sup> By 1793 the clearing was of about thirty acres with one-third of it timothy meadow, and there were cattle grazing on the pasture land.<sup>26</sup>

In the late fall of 1791, Strawbridge returned to Philadelphia for the winter. Lytelton may have remained on the Cowanesque for a time, but spent most of the winter at Newtown Point. In February, 1792, from the Point he wrote his employer that he had bought him a yoke of oxen which he had left at the Lawrenceville settlement.<sup>27</sup>

The following spring, after the rigors of the northern Pennsylvania winter had abated, the gentleman pioneer returned to the wilderness.<sup>28</sup> The work of the settlement continued with the newly purchased oxen. This was during the time of the construction of the Williamson Road. The road as originally planned was to run up the Cowanesque Valley and past the Strawbridge place. Strawbridge had made friends with Williamson, who wrote the Philadelphian asking for help in cutting a path up the Cowanesque and promising that the road would be completed in 1793.<sup>29</sup> Strawbridge had some work done on this path.<sup>30</sup> By this time Strawbridge was well known to Samuel Baker, Amos Stone, James

Kenyon, Richard Daniels and the other Connecticut people at the Lawrenceville settlement.<sup>31</sup> He was also on very good terms with Col. Eleazer Lindsley who, a few years earlier, had settled at Lindley just over the line in New York State. Strawbridge lent Lindsley money,<sup>32</sup> and in a short time was to be very glad that he had been able to do the colonel a favor.

As the year 1792 drew to a close, the gentleman pioneer appeared to be well established at James' Choice. He had thirty acres of cleared land, a snug cabin, a barn, and a little mill well on the way to completion. He had oxen and cattle; and he had Benjamin Lytelton to do the hard work. Just one thing marred the serenity and security of his situation in his new home—land title troubles. The dispute did not concern the title to James' Choice, but to land eighteen miles down stream. Early in 1793 the matter reached a climax but the trouble had its origin eight years before in the alleged chicanery of one Lewis Lewis.

Immediately upon the offer for sale of the land in the new purchase, three speculators, Josiah Lockhart, of Lancaster, Ephraim Hunter, and Lewis Lewis entered into an agreement to buy a warrant in partnership.<sup>33</sup> Lockhart was to furnish the money and the other two were to see to a choice location of the warrant. The trio obtained Warrant No. 94 in the same lottery in which the original Strawbridge warrants were drawn.<sup>34</sup> Also, in the same drawing William Dewees, of Philadelphia, obtained Warrant No. 42. In August following the lottery of May 17, 1785, a surveying party headed into William Maclay's district. A tract of 1,005.4 acres "situate on and near the forks of the south branch of Tyoga and Log Creek" was surveyed.<sup>35</sup> When the return of this survey was made to the Land Office this tract was returned as Warrant No. 94 in the name of Josiah Lockhart. Daniel Rees, a surveyor, accused Lewis Lewis, who accompanied the party, of

22. Tioga Co. Deed Book 2, pages 47, 64; Tioga Co. Deed Book 3, page 133.
23. Tubbs, page 9, note 11.
24. Tubbs, page 7, quoting memoirs of George Strawbridge; Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Adlum to Strawbridge, Feb. 2, 1793.
25. Tubbs, page 9.
26. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., offer to lease farm, Mch. 20, 1793.
27. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Lytelton to Strawbridge, Feb. 2, 1792.
28. Bingham Papers, H. S. P., Correspondence 1790's, John Adlum to William Bingham, June 2, 1792.
29. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Charles Williamson to Strawbridge, Feb. 29, 1792.
30. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., account book entry, Oct. 28, 1792.
31. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisha letter.
32. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., account book entry. As to Col. Lindsley, who settled at Lindley in 1790, see A History of Steuben Co., by Irwin W. Near, Lewis 1911, History of Steuben Co., N. Y., by W. W. Clayton, Lewis, Peck & Co., 1879, page 350.
33. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., agreement dated May 6, 1785.
34. See tables.
35. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., copy of drawing of Warrant No. 94; see also Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs warrant maps for Tioga Co.

forging his signature. Rees claimed that the greater part of the 1,005.4 acres should have been included in the lower numbered warrant of Dewees.<sup>36</sup> Dewees filed with the Land Office a caveat against the issuance of a patent to Lockhart, thus commencing litigation which continued intermittently for sixteen years.<sup>37</sup>

The Board of Property met in June, 1786, considered the matter and decided that 568.75 acres, the very center of the Lockhart warrant should be included in the Dewees warrant.<sup>38</sup> Dewees became insolvent and assigned his property for the benefit of his creditors. James Strawbridge entered the dispute when he spent the winter of 1791-92 in Philadelphia. At that time he purchased the Dewees warrant.<sup>39</sup> No further account of the litigation is needed here, except to state that Lockhart asked the Board of Property for a re-hearing, which was refused, and the case reached the Northumberland County court and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.<sup>40</sup> Strawbridge obtained the patent for the 568.75 acres included in Warrant No. 42 and his title withstood the protracted attacks in the courts.

Now, let us go back to the fall of 1792 to the land "on and near the forks of the south branch of Tyoga and Log Creek" which Strawbridge had bought the previous winter. This land was at the junction of the Tioga and Cowanesque Rivers. On a part of this tract there were settlers—settlers from Connecticut, who still hoped that their Connecticut titles might be of some value. There were Samuel Baker and his family, his father-in-law, Richard Daniels, and Mrs. Daniels. There were James Ken-

yon and Amos Stone. Baker had settled at Lawrenceville in the spring of 1787, and Stone, fleeing from the authorities after having participated in Shay's Rebellion, joined Baker by the autumn of that year. (This was four years before Strawbridge purchased the land.) William Barney and William Holden were also at Lawrenceville before 1792.<sup>41</sup> Strawbridge and the Yankee settlement had been on friendly terms during their short acquaintance. When Baker came to Tioga County, he had a Connecticut title. However, he later told Strawbridge that the Lawrenceville people desired peace and did not intend to extend the Pennamite controversy from the Wyoming Valley to the Tioga.<sup>42</sup>

However, in the latter part of 1792 the situation began to deteriorate. Warrant No. 42, by then owned by Strawbridge, was surveyed in September.<sup>43</sup> The Lawrenceville Yankees had heard that Strawbridge had bought the land. When the survey was made their anxiety was, of course, aroused. Inquiries directed to Strawbridge as to his intentions brought no satisfactory answers. Baker claimed that Strawbridge had told him that the land upon which Baker had settled belonged to Josiah Lockhart. The Yankee, not knowing how the Philadelphian had acquired title, was disturbed at Strawbridge's claim of ownership. He was irked by Strawbridge's refusal to let the little settlement know how the title matters could be adjusted. Although Baker preferred to pursue a peaceful course with his erstwhile Pennsylvania friend, it appears that some of the other settlers became so incensed at Strawbridge's attitude that they decided that more forceful means should be employed. One day when Strawbridge, his surveyor, Joseph Williams, and two chainmen were running some lines near the house of Amos Stone there was the rattle of musketry; some squibs were fired. Was this an attack by the Yankees on the Strawbridge party? Was it merely a warning that it might be well for him to talk terms of title settlement with the Lawrence-

36. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., affidavit of Rees.

37. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., notice of hearing in re caveat.

38. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., copy of order of Board of Property, June 6, 1786; see also Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs warrant maps for Tioga Co.

39. Northumberland Co. Deed Book F, page 66.

40. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., copy of order of Board of Property, May 28, 1793; Subpoena to Daniel Rees, Mch. 19, 1798, issued by Supreme Court of Pa.; copy of interrogatories in ejection proceeding of Lockhart vs. Strawbridge in Supreme Court of Pa., no date; subpoena to William Ellis to appear in Circuit Court of Northumberland Co. the first Monday of Oct., 1801, in the case of Lessees of Josiah Lockhart vs. James Strawbridge et al.

41. For references to further details as to Baker and the Lawrenceville Settlement, see McMaster and Brown, note 18 *supra*; Baker and some of the others had Connecticut titles, but the extent of the reliance which they placed upon them by 1792 is questionable.

42. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisha letter.

43. See tables; also Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs warrant maps for Tioga Co.

ville people?<sup>44</sup> We do not know. We do know that James Strawbridge became afraid for his life. Rightly or wrongly, he decided that the Yankees intended him harm, and he determined to seek such protection as the law could afford him in that place at that time. That Strawbridge's fears were justified was borne out by the report of the affair which Williams took back to John Strawbridge in Philadelphia.<sup>45</sup>

The fracas at Stone's took place in February, 1793.<sup>46</sup> James Strawbridge immediately wrote John concerning his predicament. The information contained in this letter, coupled with the report of the surveyor, Williams, caused John no little anxiety for his brother's safety. The older brother dispatched a series of letters to James imploring him to exercise the greatest of caution in dealing with his adversaries and advising him to quit his home in the wilderness without delay. John urged do "not suffer provocation to induce you to injure these who are endeavoring to injure you nor to suffer any advantage however desirable to you to reside for the present in a place where you are exposed to the resentment of an unprincipled banditti." James had asked his brother to try to persuade the Legislature to take steps to strengthen the hand of Pennsylvania claimants. John replied that his attempts at this had been unsuccessful. He was thoroughly concerned about his brother's safety and even suggested that a reported uprising of Cornplanter would

add Indian trouble to James' worries and that "the hazard of occupying any part of your land with safety will be much greater."<sup>47</sup>

While John was writing letters in Philadelphia, James was taking action on the Cowanesque. In fact, by the time the cautionary letters reached James, he had the situation quite well in hand. Without the benefit of his brother's advice, James had been both bold and cautious at the same time. Strawbridge made his way to Sunbury, the county seat (Tioga County was then a part of Northumberland) and procured writs of ejectment against Stone and James Kenyon. It would also appear that at the same time he invoked the criminal law against them. The writs of ejectment were served and Stone and Kenyon taken into custody. Whereupon, Strawbridge, taking no chances of reprisals, hurried off to the home of his friend, Col. Eleazer Lindsley, across the state line in New York, where flooded streams added to his safety.<sup>48</sup>

Just as Strawbridge was alarmed at his situation, so was Stone afraid of his position. The erstwhile adherent of Daniel Shay must have decided that, after running afoul the law in Massachusetts, he must not risk too much of an encounter with Pennsylvania authority. He capitulated, and on March 17 agreed in writing not to harm his Pennsylvania adversary, to pay the costs of the ejectment proceeding against him, and to leave his farm by the first of November. He acknowledged that the land he occupied belonged to Strawbridge and signed a bond in the amount of thirty pounds to secure the performance of his agreement.<sup>49</sup> Straw-

44. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisha letter. This letter is the only extant first-hand account of the Yankee-Strawbridge fracas. Written probably by Samuel Baker to Strawbridge, it severely denounces the Philadelphian for the retaliatory steps taken by him after the trouble at Stone's. The letter minimizes the musket shots and the firing of the squibs; however, it must be remembered that the writer was a Yankee defending the actions of Yankees; contrast this with the statement appearing in the memoirs of George Strawbridge quoted by Tubbs (Tubbs, page 10) and the oral tradition relied upon by Tubbs (Tubbs, page 10, footnotes), all to the effect that a serious attack was made upon James Strawbridge and that his fears for his life were justified. While the identities of Strawbridge's assailants are at least partially disclosed and the reason for the assault made clear by the Old Justisha letter, the details of the attack still remain a mystery.

45. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Mch. 20, 1793.

46. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Adlum to Strawbridge, Feb. 2, 1793, in which Adlum mentions that Williams is on his way to Strawbridge's place to survey.

47. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Mch. 20, 1793, Mch. 23, 1793, Apr. 27, 1793, Apr. 30, 1793.

48. An old appearance docket in the Northumberland County Prothonotary's office sets forth the ejectment case to No. 24, April Term, 1793. The file is missing. There is no record of any criminal prosecution.

Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisha letter, which states that the legal process was served on Sunday and accuses Strawbridge of sneaking off to see his mistress after setting the legal work in motion; John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Apr. 30, 1793.

49. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Bond of Amos Stone in favor of Strawbridge, Mch. 17, 1793; Stone moved to Pleasant Valley, Town of Urbana, Steuben Co., N. Y., in 1794, see History of Steuben Co., N. Y., by W. W. Clapton, Lewis, Peck & Co., 1879, page 407; for Revolutionary War record of Stone, see A History of Steuben Co., by Irwin W. Roar, Lewis, 1911, page 353.

bridge lost no time in writing his brother the good news. John, when he finally received the letter over a month later, was greatly relieved, but replied "You ought to have suitable characters fixed on these lands even though you have no advantage for the present. Otherwise a new lot may give you the same trouble you now have. I wish you would so arrange matters as not to confine you in that neighborhood for the present."<sup>50</sup> John did not know it, but James had reached the same conclusion. James Strawbridge, Esquire, Tioga County's gentleman pioneer, had decided he had had enough of Yankees. The day after he relayed to John the news of Stone's surrender he penned an advertisement offering to lease the farm on the Cowanesque and offering to sell the stock also.<sup>51</sup> Faithful Benjamin Lytelton had told Strawbridge that he was quitting.<sup>52</sup> The loss of the hired man probably influenced his employer in his decision to leave the wilderness.

Although the Stone case was settled, there was the matter of James Kenyon against whom Strawbridge had invoked both the civil and the criminal law. Kenyon was in jail.<sup>53</sup> However, it appears that Strawbridge was not spending much time on the Cowanesque, but was enjoying the hospitality of his friend, Lindsley, with occasional visits to Newtown.<sup>54</sup> It was not until June that Kenyon came to terms. He then signed an agreement in the nature of a peace bond in the amount of fifty pounds.<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after Strawbridge had asserted his rights against the two Yankees who had so greatly disturbed him he received a letter at Colonel Lindsley's which must also have disconcerted him to no small degree. The writer of this letter did not sign his name, but he refers to himself as "old Baker". Although Samuel Baker was not much more than thirty years of age at the time, I believe that he wrote the letter. It was written by a man of some intelligence. Ba-

50. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Apr. 30, 1793.

51. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., copy of notice, Mch. 20, 1793.

52. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Apr. 30, 1793.

53. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge to James Strawbridge, Apr. 30, 1793.

54. All letters to Strawbridge during this period were addressed in care of Col. Lindsley; the advertisement to lease the farm was written at Newtown.

55. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Kenyon agreement, dated June 11, 1793.

ker was such a man. It is apparent from the contents of the letter that the writer was not attempting to conceal his identity. We can be certain that James Strawbridge knew who wrote the letter, Baker was the leader of the Lawrenceville settlement and would feel very strongly about the situation. The contents of the letter point to Baker as its author.

The epistle, as Baker called it, was an indictment by the Yankee against the Philadelphian, couched in the strongest terms. The salutation is: "Cruel Monster." "Wonder Not at the Expression but look on your own conduct and view with a single eye the dreadful unheard of crimes you are guilty of . . . your dam sulky way wont give me no answer and when you was spoken to by any of the people say nothing about the land but like the Snake in the grass Lay Still until you could make a fatal grab." Referring to the agreement which Strawbridge obtained from Stone, the Yankee wrote "It is no less than duress in the high handest manner and little less than murder." After a further recounting of what Strawbridge had done, the letter continues: "You may think to Escape Punishment by the laws of men but the Laws of God will bring you to the Bar of Justice with Evidence of a guilty conscience which no hardened sinner can withstand." With the following threat the letter concludes: "You put me in mind of Balam's ass who could not speak until he saw the angel. You may chance to meet the angel in the woods who I dare say will make you speak."<sup>56</sup>

No doubt this letter strengthened Strawbridge's determination to return to Philadelphia.

Strawbridge was making preparations to depart and so were the Yankees. Through

56. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., Old Justisha letter. This undated letter was signed "Old Justisha"; the contents indicate that it was written soon after Stone and Kenyon were taken into custody. Just as Baker referred to "old" Baker, he signed the letter "Old" Justisha; he may have been referring to the Latin word for justice, "justitia," and not knowing how to spell the word, spelled it phonetically. Although Baker was a man of some education and afterwards became a lay judge, it does not seem likely that his chosen pseudonym was intended for "jus tertii" i. e. the law of the third person, a term used in realty actions in which one of the litigants based his claim on a paramount title in a third person, not a party to the action: such a pseudonym would have been appropriate, but it is unlikely that Baker knew that much law or Latin.

Charles Williamson, who was at Lawrenceville in the late Spring of 1793, Baker and Stone learned that land could be had from the Pultney Estate in New York State near Keuka Lake. There would be no question as to title. They purchased the land and set about the task of making a new home. By the following year the Bakers, the Stones, the Daniels, and William Barney had all left Lawrenceville and settled on the Pultney Estate lands.<sup>57</sup> William Holden pushed further up the Cowanesque, but always remained a squatter.<sup>58</sup> James Kenyon went farther up the Tioga.<sup>59</sup>

Strawbridge was unable to obtain a tenant for his place. Most of the people who were coming into the country were Yankees or Yankee sympathizers. The story of the Lawrenceville incident was, of course told to them, and we may be sure that the Connecticut people wanted nothing to do with the owner of James's Choice. It was not until 1798 when Ebenezer Seelye and William Knox came into the Cowanesque Valley that the Strawbridge "improvement" was occupied.<sup>60</sup> A daughter of Colonel Lindsley married John Seelye, a brother of Ebenezer, and it would appear that it was through this old friendship that an occupant for James' Choice was finally obtained.<sup>61</sup> Just when in the summer of 1793 Strawbridge started back for Philadelphia is not clear. He remained until June at least.<sup>62</sup> By September he was back in Philadelphia and living at the southwest corner of Fifth and Market Streets.<sup>63</sup> He never returned to Tioga County to live.

Shortly after James' return, his brother John died, a victim of Philadelphia's terrible yellow fever epidemic of that year.<sup>64</sup> The older brother had built up a sizeable wholesale business. Among the commodities dealt in at the Walnut Street Wharf estab-

lishment were tobacco, flour, leather, wine, and brandy.<sup>65</sup> John left a widow, Hannah, and five children, including four boys. None of the sons were old enough to operate the business. James was one of the executors of his brother's will, and it was James who entered into arrangements to continue the business under a plan of purchase.<sup>66</sup>

Tioga real estate still appealed as an investment to "James Strawbridge, Esquire, Merchant at Walnut Wharf" as some of his letters were then addressed. The price of the remaining land in the new purchase had been reduced to \$13.33 per 100 acres on April 2, 1792.<sup>67</sup> In February, 1794, Strawbridge purchased six more warrants, totaling approximately 5,600 acre; in the Cowanesque Valley, mostly hill land on the north side of the river. He obtained the patents the following year.<sup>68</sup> He also bought 600 acres in the lower Troups Creek valley from James Stewart, warrantee, and obtained the patents for this land. With the previous purchases this made the Strawbridge brothers the owners of all of the land north of the Cowanesque River to the New York State line from the Elkland Borough line to the Westfield Township line. Within the next two years Strawbridge bought four more warrants in Lawrence Township (he already owned Warrant No. 42 in Lawrence which had caused him so much trouble) and four warrants in Tioga Township, including the present site of the Borough of Tioga.<sup>69</sup> Thus we see that the present boroughs of Knoxville, Lawrenceville, and Tioga, the oldest villages in Tioga County, were all carved out of James Strawbridge holdings.

Strawbridge was a tireless worker in his efforts to promote the value of his considerable holdings. Mr. Tubbs wrote "He was a prominent member of the Land Owners'

57. See notes 18 and 41.

58. Brown, page 527; there are no deeds on record in Tioga County to William Holden.

59. Copy of U. S. Census for Tioga Township in 1800 lists James Kenyon on the Tioga River south of Lawrenceville, Pa. Census for 1800 appearing in Brown page 42, lists James "Kinyon."

60. Brown, page 413.

61. Capt. John Seelye, a son-in-law of Col. Lindsley, came to Lindley with him; see History of Steuben Co., N. Y., by W. W. Clayton, Lewis Peck & Co., 1879, page 350. John Seelye was a brother of Ebenezer; see A Pioneer Family by Mrs. E. H. Owlett. Papers of Tioga Co. Historical Society, Part 1, Vol. 1, Advocate, Wellsboro, Pa., 1911.

62. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Lawson to Strawbridge, June 10, 1793, addressed "at Cowanesque".

63. Will of John Strawbridge, dated Sept. 13, 1793, probated Sept. 20, 1793, No. 265, Book W., page 470, Office of Register of Wills, Philadelphia; from the record it is evident that James Strawbridge, an executor, was present at the probate of his brother's will; letters in the Strawbridge Collection from this date on bear the Fifth and Market Street address. See also Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania, Vol. 12, Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1950, as to cause of John's death.

64. See previous note.

65. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., various memoranda.

66. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., various memoranda.

67. History of Tioga Co., Munsell and Co., 1883, page 338.

68. See tables.

69. See tables.

Association.”<sup>70</sup> In view of his experience with the Connecticut people and his investment in Tioga land, we may be certain that Strawbridge played no small part in bringing about the passage by the legislature of the Intrusion Acts of 1795, 1801, and 1802.<sup>71</sup>

He was much interested in the North-South State Road from Newberry to the 109th milestone on the New York-Pennsylvania line which was to go past his “improvement”. He had some work done at his own expense on a road up the Cowanesque before the State Road was authorized in 1799, and took an active interest in the location of the highway.<sup>72</sup>

By 1800 Strawbridge was selling land instead of buying. He sold two warrants containing approximately 650 acres in Shippen Township near Ansonia to James C. Fisher, who obtained the patents.<sup>73</sup> These were two of the original James Strawbridge warrants going back to the lottery of 1785. As the years went by, we must conclude that Strawbridge was not making sufficient money at the Walnut Street Wharf establishment to keep up his payments on the business. In 1801 he made a trip to the Tioga and Cowanesque Valleys for the purpose of expediting the sale of more of his land. This journey met with no success. The Connecticut settlers had no money, but did have the encouragement and advice of Col. John Franklin. Franklin lived at Tioga Point and was a leader in the Connecticut cause. His advice to the Yankees was not to buy. Accordingly, Strawbridge felt that

it was still next to impossible to do business with the Yankees.<sup>74</sup> Other efforts to sell at the price Strawbridge wanted also failed. By 1802 the land-speculator, turned pioneer, turned merchant needed considerable cash for the payment for the Walnut Street Wharf business. He borrowed \$14,650.00 from George Lattimer, another Philadelphia speculator, giving as security a mortgage upon his five warrants in Lawrence Township and the four in Tioga Township. Other lands not in Tioga County were included in this mortgage.<sup>75</sup> James had thus scraped the bottom of the barrel in so far as cash was concerned and John's estate had to be satisfied with another mortgage, in the amount of \$30,000.00, to secure the balance of the purchase price of the business. This mortgage covered the thirteen James Strawbridge warrants in the Cowanesque Valley.<sup>76</sup>

Having encumbered all his real estate, Strawbridge continued his efforts to sell the land and thus liquidate his indebtedness. Again he was doomed to disappointment. He enlisted the aid of James S. Mitchell, of York, in disposing of his holdings. Mitchell wrote Strawbridge that he was doing his best to sell the land for three dollars per acre, if he failed, he would attempt to barter, and, if that failed, Mitchell concluded “I will go and settle in Tioga and I would as leave go and settle in .....”<sup>77</sup>

Urged on by his brother's children, who needed the money, Strawbridge persisted in his efforts all in vain.<sup>78</sup> The man, who, because of his extensive holdings, influenced so much the early settlement of northern Tioga County, was approaching the end of his adversities. In northern Tioga County his troubles had started; they continued after his return to Philadelphia. Bowed down by financial worries, his health began to

70. Tubbs, page 13; the Pennsylvania Land Owners Association was formed at Dunwood's, Jan. 10, 1800, for the purpose of preventing and removing intrusions, see Pa. Archives, Second Ser., Vol. 18, as to this association, and page 398 for specific mention of Strawbridge.

71. Act of Apr. 11, 1795, Sm. Laws, Vol. 3, page 209

Act of Feb. 16, 1801, Sm. Laws, Vol. 3, page 457

Act of Ar. 6, 1802, Sm. Laws, Vol. 3, page 525

These acts were for the purpose of providing punishment for so called intruders who had no title and of protecting the property of persons who had valid Pennsylvania titles. They were difficult of enforcement, and after the Connecticut trouble abated they were repealed by the Act of Mch. 6, 1814, Laws of Pa., Vol. 6, page 122.

72. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., receipt of James Mills for \$20.00 for work on the road, Sept. 3, 1797; Joseph Williams to Strawbridge, July 20, 1801, as to the route near the Big Island on the Cowanesque.

73. See tables; also Pa. Dept. of Internal Affairs warrant maps for Tioga Co.

74. James Strawbridge at Painted Post to Edward Tilghman, Esq., July 13, 1801; a copy of this letter was attached to a paper delivered before the Historical Society of Tioga Co. by Charles Tubbs, circa 1911; See Pa. Archives, Second Ser., Vol. 18, page 406, for light upon the tactics of the Connecticut people which were to pretend to title, refuse to buy, and thus reduce the price.

75. Lycoming Co. Deed Book 4, page 193; this mortgage was dated Mch. 29, 1802, and recorded July 24, 1802.

76. Lycoming Co. Deed Book 6, page 113; this mortgage was dated July 24, 1802, and recorded May 19, 1804.

77. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., James S. Mitchell to Strawbridge, Feb. 24, 1803, Apr. 20, 1804

78. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., John Strawbridge, Jr., to James Strawbridge, Sept. 20, 1803.

fail. There is something pathetic in the final years of this Philadelphia gentleman who had so much faith in the land along the Cowanesque and the Tioga. It was a faith which caused him to invest a large portion of his wealth in its purchase; it was a faith which constrained him to attempt to make his home there; it was a faith which impelled him to fight in many forms for its protection. Rather than sell at another's price, he held onto the land to the very end, although the land as well as the man was burdened with indebtedness.

James Strawbridge died November 14, 1805, "after a long and affective illness" according to Poulson's Daily Advertiser.<sup>79</sup> He was only fifty years old. The body was buried in the cemetery of the Second Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, where Strawbridge had been a member for many years.<sup>80</sup> Unmarried and without children, he left a quarter of his encumbered estate to his brother's children to whom he was indebted.<sup>81</sup> The inevitable foreclosures followed, and George Strawbridge, one of James' young nephews, recently returned from Princeton, purchased the land along the Cowanesque.<sup>82</sup> In the years that followed, George, personally and through his

agents, was able to accomplish what his uncle had failed. He sold the land to the Yankee settlers.<sup>83</sup>

We have peered but dimly through the murk that obscures the life of this early Tioga County pioneer. With such faulty vision a just appraisal of his character is difficult. The obituary appearing in Poulson's Daily Advertiser is not helpful. Most of it is given over to moralizing, and the few statements relative to the character of Strawbridge lack the ring of sincerity.

Strawbridge was ambitious and energetic. His courage was of the mind rather than physical. He was tenacious, persistent, and stubborn. His experiences with the Yankees demonstrate these traits, and also show that at times at least he was deficient in tact. His brother John considered him capable of rashness upon occasion, as John's letters to him clearly indicate. Although he was never able to pay his indebtedness to John's family, James kept the esteem and affection of his brother's children. Measured by material attainments, James Strawbridge was a failure. Tioga County remembers him for what he tried to do—for his efforts rather than his accomplishments.

79. Issue of Nov. 18, 1805; a file of this paper is in the archives of Ridway Library, Broad and Christian Sts., Philadelphia.

80. Strawbridge Collection, H. S. P., receipts for rent for Pew 66.

81. Will of James Strawbridge, dated Sept. 9, 1805, probated November 29, 1805, No. 109, Book I, page 411, Office of Register of Wills, Philadelphia.

82. Lycoming Co. Sheriff's Deed Book I, page 6, Prothonotary's Office, Williamsport, Pa., recites sheriff's sale Nov. 28, 1807, and deed dated Dec. 4, 1807.

83. The early Tioga Co. deed books show many deeds from George Strawbridge to the early settlers, together with purchase money mortgages in favor of Strawbridge.



# JAMES STRAWBRIDGE WARRANTS

No.	Acres	Warrant Date	Survey Date	Patent Date	Name of Warrant	Patent Book Reference	Township and Location	Additional Information
451	268.75	5-17-85	6-25-86	1-23-87	James Choice	P-8-295	Deerfield — vicinity of Academy Corners	
345	311	5-17-85	6-24-86	1-23-87	Pleasant Garden	P-8-294	Deerfield—in Cowanesque Valley between Howland (Wagner) farm and Bacon-Tubbs (Anderson) farm	
531	732	5-17-85	6-25-86	1-23-87	Delight	P-8-293	Deerfield-Knoxville Borough Borough, and each side	Thomas Proctor was the warrantee-Strawbridge bought Nov. 22, 1786, and patent issued to him.
202	302.5	5-17-85	8-4-92				Deerfield — south of Academy Corners	
338	297	5-17-85	6-12-90	1-14-95	Mansfield	P-26-193	Deerfield-Troups Creek	James Stewart was the warrantee of these two warrants; patent issued to Strabridge
457	303	5-17-85	6-12-90	1-15-95	Oatland	P-26-192	Deerfield-Troups Creek	
5110	1100	4-14-13	6-1-94	1-8-95	Fertility	P-25-418	Deerfield — northeast of Troops Creek valley including Biscuit Hollow	
5177	1100	2-25-94	6-194	1-8-95	Richland	P-26-193	Deerfield — hill land north of Knoxville	
5178	1099	2-25-94	5-31-94	1-8-95	Pleasant	P-26-194	Deerfield — hill land north of Cowanesque Valley from Academy Corners east to Bacon-Tubbs (Anderson) farm	
5179	1099	2-25-94	5-31-94	1-8-95	Pleasant Valley	P-25-417	Osceola — hill land north of No. 5178 to N. Y. line — Bulkley Hollow	
5180	1099	2-25-94	5-30-94	1-8-95	Springe Grove	P-25-416	Osceola — hill land north of No. 5177 to N. Y. line — headwaters of Bulkley Brook	
5181	659	2-25-94	6-1-94	1-8-95	Blooming Grove	P-25-417	Deerfield — northwest corner of Deerfield Township	
5182	564.5	2-25-94	5-30-94	5-30-95	St. James	P-26-195	Osceola — Camp Brook to N. Y. line	
42	568.75	5-17-85	9-10-92	8-2-94	Tioga	P-21-465	Lawrence-Lawrenceville Borough Wm. Dewes, warrantee, conveyed his interest to Strawbridge	Northumberland Co. Deed Book F, page 66, deed dated 1-19-1792 Strawbridge was patentee

## JAMES STRAWBRIDGE WARRANTS

No.	Acres	Warrant Date	Survey Date	Name of Warrant	Patent Book Reference	Township and Location	Additional Information
402	328.5	5-17-85	9-16-87	1-31-1800	Southhampton	P-35-640	Patents were obtained by James C. Fisher; these were two of the original Strawbridge warrants
519	317	5-17-85	10-29-92	1-31-1800	Portsmouth	P-35-638	Shippen
39	509	5-17-85	8-4-85	11-9-91	Indian Fields	P-18-276	Shippen near junction of Marsh Creek and Pine Creek
61	500	5-17-85	8-5-85	7-6-87	Fair Hill	P-11-481	Shippen
67	500	5-17-85	8-5-85	11-9-91	Pleasant Grove Hermitage	P-18-274	Shippen
5243	1039	2-26-94	7-10-1802	9-12-1804		P-55-32	Tioga
6272	1117.5	2-26-94	8-9-96	6-22-98	Aberdeen	P-32-635	Shippen
6273	1117.5	2-26-94	8-9-96	6-22-98	Parnassus	P-32-637	Shippen
6274	827.5	2-26-94	8-10-96	6-22-98	Dundee	P-32-636	Shippen
6578	224	3-19-94	5-15-94	10-30-94	Milton	P-22-356	Lawrence
							Warrant issued to David Harris—patent to Strawbridge

Total Acreage — 16037.5

# JOHN STRAWBRIDGE WARRANTS

No.	Acres	Warrant Date	Survey Date	Patent Date	Name of Warrant	Patent Book Reference	Township and Location		Additional Information
							Patented to	James Strawbridge	
373	289	5-17-85	6-22-86	1-24-87	Huntingdon	P-8-305	Osceola—about the mouth of Holden Brook — also south of river		
551	326	5-17-85	6-22-86	1-24-87	Chatham	P-8-306	Osceola—in Cowanesque Valley from Elkland Borough line to Holden Brook.		
416	320	5-17-85	6-23-86	1-24-87	Coventry	P-8-305	Osceola — in Cowanesque Valley west of village of Osceola		
529	324.25	5-17-85	6-23-86	1-24-87	Cornwell	P-8-304	Osceola—in Cowanesque Valley east of Bacon-Tubbs (now Anderson) farm		
355	301.25	5-17-85	9-2-86	1-24-87	Colchester	P-8-303	Osceola — from Holden Brook north to N. Y. line		
3697	1092.75	1-31-93	5-30-94	6-26-95	Confidence	P-26-192	Osceola-Bulkeley Hollow and north of Bulkeley farm to N. Y. lines	Patented to James Strawbridge	
158	438.5	5-17-85	8-31-86	1-6-89	Long Meadows Addition	P-14-465	Delmar	These were ad-	These three warrants were sold July 1, 1801, by James Strawbridge, acting executor of John Strawbridge, to Benjamin W. Morris
209	300	5-17-85	8-31-86	7-5-87	Sugar Tree Bottom	P-14-466	Delmar	joining warrants in and around Wellsboro	
283	300	5-17-85	8-31-86	7-5-87	Long Meadows	P-14-467	Delmar	Junction	

Total Acreage — 3691.75













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